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FM AMEMBASSY NIAMEY
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INFO RHMFISS/HQ USAFRICOM STUTTGART GE PRIORITY
RHMFISS/CDR USAFRICOM STUTTGART GE PRIORITY
RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC

UNCLAS NIAMEY 000391

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y - PASS ADDRESSEE ADDED

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DEPT PASS TO TSCTP COLLECTIVE
PLS PASS TO USAID FOR AFR/W
ACCRA ALSO FOR USAID/WA
PARIS FOR AFRICA WATCHER

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SUBJECT: President Tandja Announces Intentions to Hold
Constitutional Referendum

Ref: a) Niamey 00376 b) Niamey 00378 c) Niamey 00381

¶1. (U) On Friday, March 29, President Mamadou Tandja addressed the nation on state television (Tele-Sahel) to inform Nigeriens of his intentions to seek a new constitution, via referendum, that would lift the current limit on presidential terms. This announcement comes despite the Nigerien Constitutional Court's publicized May 23 unfavorable opinion that such a referendum would not be in conformity with the Nigerien constitution, in short, unconstitutional (ref a). It also follows President Tandja's May 26 dissolution of the National Assembly (ref b). President Tandja did not confirm in his address to the nation a date for the referendum.

President Tandja Cites Article 49

¶2. (U) President Tandja stated that the proposed constitutional referendum would allow the people to "adopt a presidential regime, which is necessary given the current constitution's limitations." According to Article 49 of Niger's constitution, the president must seek the advice of the Constitutional Court and the National Assembly before subjecting the constitution to a referendum. It goes on to say that, "the president can submit to referendum all text that he believes requires direct consultation with the people."

¶3. (U) Minimize considered.

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